

A SHORT MEMOIR
OF
THE LIFE OF EDMUND LAW, D.D.,
BISHOP OF CARLISLE.
BY WILLIAM PALEY, D.D. *K*

(EXTRACTED FROM HUTCHINSON'S "HISTORY OF
CUMBERLAND," VOL. II. P. 636—638. SEE ALSO
THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.)

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1800.

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OF EDWARD LEE, D.D.

BY THE REV. J. H. W. L.

W. L. G. D.D.

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THE LIFE OF EDMUND LAW, D.D.

EDMUND LAW, DD. was born in the parish of Cartmel in Lancashire, in the year 1703. His father, who was a clergyman, held a small chapel in that neighbourhood; but the family had been situated at Askham, in the county of Westmorland. He was educated for some time at Cartmel school, afterwards at the free grammar-school at Kendal; from which he went, very well instructed in the learning of grammar-schools, to St. John's college in Cambridge.

Soon after taking his first degree, he was elected fellow of Christ's college in that university*. During his residence in which college, he became known to the public by a translation of archbishop King's "Essay upon the origin of evil," with copious notes; in which many metaphysical subjects, curious and

* He took the degree of B. A. 1723, M. A. 1727.

interesting

interesting in their own nature, are treated with great ingenuity, learning, and novelty*. To this work was prefixed, under the name of "A preliminary dissertation," a very valuable piece, written by the rev. Mr. Gay, of Sidney college. Our bishop always spoke of this gentleman in terms of the greatest respect. In the bible, and in the writings of Mr. Locke, no man, he was used to say, was so well versed†.

He also, whilst at Christ college, undertook and went through a very laborious part, in preparing for the press, an edition of Stephens's Thesaurus‡. His acquaintance, during his first residence in the university, was principally with Dr. Waterland, the learned master of Magdalen college; Dr. Jortin, a name

* There is a view of the controversy in consequence of Dr. Clarke's "Demonstration of the being and attributes of God" &c. in the Gen. Dict. art. *Clarke*, vol. iv. p. 357—359, note (1).—Mr. Law's translation of archbishop King's Essay on the origin of evil, with notes, was not overlooked in this metaphysical warfare; and his "postscript" to his 2d edit. was a replication to "a second defence of Dr. Clarke." Further controversy ensued, which produced our author's "Inquiry into the ideas of space, time," &c.

† Rev. John Gay, B. A. 1721, M. A. 1725, was fellow of Sidney college.—It is to be regretted that no further information has been obtained respecting this gentleman.

‡ "Roberti Stephani Thesaurus Linguae Latinae. Editio nova prioribus multo auctior et emendatior."—Four vols. in folio, printed 1734. The dedication to the king is dated "Cantabrigiae pridie Id. Aprilis mcccxxxv." and subscribed by himself and colleagues;
Edmundus

name known to every scholar; and Dr. Taylor, the editor of Demosthenes*.

In the year 1737, he was presented by the university to the living of Graystock, in the county of

Edmundus Law, Joannes Taylor, Thomas Johnson, Sandys Hutchinson. Concerning this edition of Stephens's Thesaurus, see Nichols's Anecdotes of Bowyer, p. 64. note *, and Bowyer's Miscellaneous tracts (there referred to) for some pieces in a controversy respecting the proposals for, and execution of, this work.

Of Dr. Taylor some account may be seen in the Anecdotes of Bowyer: he graduated B. A. 1724, M. A. 1728, LL. D. 1741.—Mr. Johnson took his degree of B. A. 1724, and M. A. 1728; was fellow of Magdalen college, and printed a sermon, on the insufficiency of the law of nature, preached before the university of Cambridge April 4, 1731.—Mr. Hutchinson was of Trinity coll. B. A. 1727, and M. A. 1731.

* Dr. Waterland was many years and Dr. Jortin a few years the senior of Dr. Law. Dr. Taylor was his contemporary.—The late archdeacon Blackburne was three years his junior in the university, taking his first degree 1726; and, as he did not afterwards reside in college, may not properly be classed among his literary friends there, at this time.—But their friendship commenced early in life, and was improved by the joint interest they afterwards took in the question concerning the intermediate state. It was cemented by a long and unreserved correspondence, and by personal intercourse; and also by the general agreement of their opinions concerning the right and expediency of requiring subscription to articles of faith. Bishop Law owed so much to the learned labours of archdeacon Blackburne, that to omit the name of the one, in any memoir of the other, is to violate the integrity of the narrative, and to affect to conceal a part of the truth. In the latter part of their lives, a coolness existed between them, which, probably, was lamented by both: but which it would be difficult, perhaps, satisfactorily to explain.

Cumberland,

Cumberland, a rectory of about 300*l.* a year. The advowson of this benefice belonged to the family of Howards of Graystock, but devolved to the university for this turn, by virtue of an act of parliament, which transfers to these two bodies the nomination to such benefices as appertain, at the time of their vacancy, to the patronage of a roman catholic. The right, however, of the university was contested; and it was not till after a law-suit of two years continuance that Mr. Law was settled in his living*. Soon after this, he married Mary, the daughter of John Christian esq. of Unerigg, in the county of Cum-

* The rectory of Graystock is said to be now of the value of 450*l.* a year. Mr. Law was presented by the university in 1737, as stated by Dr. Paley; but in 1746 he resigned, and was re-instituted on the presentation of Adam Askew, esq. patron by purchase from Charles Howard, esq. the late duke of Norfolk. (See Hutchinson's Cumberland, vol. i. p. 407, 408, and note.)—This resignation, and re-institution in 1746, was an accommodation to Mr. Law, by removing the special obligation to residence imposed upon incumbents presented by either of the universities in consequence of the acts respecting the patronage of roman catholics; and removed all difficulties in the way of Mr. Law's future residence at Salkeld. This matter is stated as follows by Hutchinson; (in his History of Durham, vol. ii. p. 216.)—"When Mr. Howard (afterwards duke of Norfolk) sold the advowson of Graystock, he stipulated with the purchaser in favor of Mr. Law, for a presentation from a protestant patron. Mr. Law accordingly resigned this rectory, and had a new presentation from Dr. Askew, the purchaser. This allowed him to remove to Salkeld, the corps of the archdeaconry of Carlisle, a much more healthy situation, given him by bishop Fleming."

berland;

berland; a lady, whose character is remembered with tenderness and esteem by all who knew her*.

In 1743 he was promoted by sir George Fleming, bishop of Carlisle, to the archdeaconry of that diocese; and in 1746 went from Graystock to reside at Salkeld, a pleasant village upon the banks of the river Eden, the rectory of which is annexed to the archdeaconry. Mr. Law was not one of those who lose and forget themselves in the country. During his residence at Salkeld, he published "Considerations on the theory of religion;" to which he subjoined

* Mrs. Law, daughter of John Christian, esq. of Unerigg in the parish of Dearham in the county of Cumberland, was born March 19, 1721-2, and married at Dearham June 24, 1740.—See Hutchinson's Cumberland, ii. 148.—There is a pleasant story in the Hollis Memoirs, ii. 507, which is well understood to be related on the authority of Dr. Law, who occasionally introduced it with much good humour.—The story is as follows:—"A certain roman catholic lady, disputing with the wife of the parson of the parish, concerning the impropriety of trusting the bible in the hands of the common people, brought as an instance of it, the strange story, told, as she asserted by Moses, of the devil tempting Eve in the shape of a toad. On the other hand, the honest woman, like a good protestant, defended Moses tooth and nail, insisting on the credibility of the narrative, and the edification a good christian might receive from it. The controversy grew warm, and perhaps might have ended in *main force et dure*, had not the honest rector entered, and, with some pleasantry, put an end to it, by informing the parties, that it was not the honor of Moses that was at issue, but of John Milton the poet."

"Reflec-

“Reflections on the life and character of Christ*,” and an appendix concerning the use of the words “soul and spirit” in holy scripture, and the state of the dead there described †.

Dr. Keene held at this time, with the bishoprick of Chester, the mastership of Peterhouse in Cambridge. Desiring to leave the university, he procured Mr. Law to be elected to succeed him in that station. This took place in the year 1754; in which year Dr. Law resigned his archdeaconry in favor of Mr. Eyre, a brother-in-law of Dr. Keene‡. Five years before this, he proceeded to his degree of doctor in divinity; in his public exercise for which, he defended the doctrine of what is usually called the “sleep of the soul§.”

About

* The “Reflections on the life and character of Christ” were published at Cambridge 1776, as a tract; accompanied with a summary and appendix on the gospel morals by Mr. Paley; and inscribed to the duke of Grafton.

† In his controversy on the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, Dr. Law was ably and eminently supported by the assistance of archdeacon Blackburne, Mr. Peckard afterwards dean of Peterborough and mast. of Mag. coll. Camb. and Dr. B. Dawson rector of Burgh in Suffolk. The opposition of archbishop Secker being the opposition of power and influence, not of reason and scripture, ceased with his life.

‡ In consequence of his mastership of Peterhouse, he was vice-chancellor of the university, 1755.

§ Mr. Law proceeded D. D. 1749.—Upon occasion of the usual exercise, says Mr. Hutchinson (see his Hist. of Durham, ii.

About the year 1760, he was appointed head librarian of the university; a situation which, as it procured an easy and quick access to books, was peculiarly agreeable to his taste and habits. Some time

216, 217,) "the divinity school was unusually crowded, and the "rigidly orthodox were so alarmed at his question that it gave occasion to much altercation afterwards, in a variety of publications; "but he himself, unwilling to give further offence, "thought it a "part of christian prudence not to be more explicit on the subject, "till men appeared more willing to submit their vain philosophy to "the authority of God's word, and are disposed to examine things "with greater attention and impartiality; concluding in the words "of honest bishop Taylor, that *he had been so pushed at by herds and "flocks of people, that follow any body that whistles to them, or drives "them to pasture, that he was grown afraid of any truth that seemed "chargeable with singularity.*"—I give the passage as cited by the historian of Durham, but cannot, at this instant, ascertain the authority on which he has related this acknowledgement of an unbecoming timidity upon a question, on which his friends voluntarily supported him, and on which Dr. Law was no further even inconveniently committed than as it might interfere with his future preferment.

The only apology that I have observed is to be found in the last three pages of his "postscript" to his Cumberland edition of his Theory; which is only a republication of part of a paper in the Monthly review for May 1760, (vol. xxii, 353—362.)

But concerning the temper of some people in the university, and of others out of it, respecting the subject of his thesis and his appendix to his Theory—see an extract from the papers of the rev. John Jones of Alconbury in Hunts, afterwards of Shipall in Herts, (the editor of the Candid disquisitions and of the Appeal to reason and candor) in the Gentleman's Magazine for August 1787, vol. lvii, 745.

after

after this, he was also appointed casuistical professor*. In the year 1762, he suffered an irreparable loss by the death of his wife; a loss in itself every way afflicting, and rendered more so by the situation of his family, which then consisted of eleven children, many of them very young. Some years afterwards, he received several preferments, which were rather honorable expressions of regard from his friends, than of much advantage to his fortune.

By Dr. Cornwallis, then bishop of Lichfield, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, who had been his pupil at Christ college, he was appointed to the archdeaconry of Staffordshire, and to a prebend in the church of Lichfield†. By his old acquaintance, Dr.

* He was appointed head librarian in 1760, as stated above: but it does not appear how such appointment to a sinecure place could facilitate his access to books, which were previously open to admittance, with the privilege of removing them to his house whenever he pleased. The place is said to have been made, and a salary of 50 l. per annum annexed to it, for the sake of giving it to Dr. C. Middleton: and has since been continued for the same reason that it was instituted. (See Nichols's Anecdotes of Bowyer, p. 62, note f.)

—Dr. Law was appointed casuistical professor 1764.—Since writing the former part of this note, I have seen it simply stated (in Hutchinson's Hist. of Durham, vol. ii. p. 217.) that "having a numerous family, he afterwards accepted the office of principal librarian, and that of casuistical professor."

† 1763, Archdeacon of Stafford and prebendary of Lichfield. 1764 prebendary of Lincoln.

Green,

Green, bishop of Lincoln, he was made a prebendary of that church. But in the year 1767, by the intervention of the duke of Newcastle, to whose interest, in the memorable contest for the high-stewardship of the university, he had adhered in opposition to some temptations, he obtained a stall in the church of Durham. The year after this*, the duke of Grafton, who had a short time before been elected chancellor of the university, recommended the master of Peterhouse to his majesty for the bishoprick of Carlisle. This recommendation was made, not only without solicitation on his part or that of his friends, but without his knowledge, until the duke's intention in his favor was signified to him by the archbishop. In or about the year 1777, our bishop gave to the public a handsome edition, in four quarto volumes of the works of Mr. Locke, with the life of the author, and a preface. Mr. Locke's writings and character he held in the highest esteem, and seems to have drawn from them many of his own principles: he was a disciple of that school†. About the same time he

* Dr. Law was installed August 8, 1767, a prebendary of Durham.—His appointment to the bishoprick of Carlisle was in February 1769, and he held the mastership of Peterhouse and the rectory of Graystock *in commendam*. (Hutchinson's Hist. of Durham, vol. ii. 217.)

† It should seem that the department which bishop Law undertook in this edition had been too hastily executed to answer the expectation of his friends. See Hollis Memoirs, vol. i. 387, 388.

published a tract, which engaged some attention in the controversy concerning subscription*; and he published new editions of his two principal works, with considerable additions, and some alterations†. Besides the works already mentioned, he published in 1734 or 1735, a very ingenious "Inquiry into the ideas

* This very valuable tract, entitled, "Considerations on the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith," was printed at Cambridge 1774.—It was answered by Dr. Randolph of Oxford, from the Clarendon press. "*A friend of religious liberty*" replied to the Oxford champion the same year in a very able "Defence of the considerations." A tract pretty confidently ascribed to Dr. Paley.

† The first edition of Dr. Law's Theory was published 1745.—The 7th and last was printed at Carlisle in 1784, and, as Dr. Paley says "with some alterations," so likewise with some "considerable" omissions, as well as "additions." Dr. Law had, by gradual progression, advanced into the arian system, and in his last edition he appears to have shaken off the shackles of the pre-existent doctrine. In a private letter to a friend dated from Cambridge, Sept. 23, 1783, he says—"I desire your acceptance of my Camberland edition of my Theory, [anti-dated in the title] purged of some ancient prejudices relative to pre-existence, &c."—And it is not a little singular, that, after the bishop had expunged from his text what chiefly appertained to his "ancient prejudices," he was obliged to leave the management of his index to some heedless curator of the press, and we are consequently directed as follows—"Christ, his original state, p. 289;" but upon consulting the place, the passage is not to be found. Part of the words omitted by the author are the following:—"Let us begin where the beloved disciple dates his gospel, (who had much higher manifestations, and a more perfect knowledge of his master, than any other of the evangelists;) and with

ideas of space, time," &c. in which he combats the opinions of Dr. Clarke and his adherents on these subjects*.

Dr. Law held the see of Carlisle almost nineteen years; during which time he twice, only, omitted spending

with him reflect a little on Christ's *original state* and *subsequent humiliation*. That a being of infinite glory and perfection, the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, and the lord of heaven and earth; should condescend to degrade himself from all this power and dignity; divest himself of every glorious attribute," &c. &c.—If more evidence were wanting,—more might be had, in what sense he considered the opening of John's gospel.

In the last editions of his translation of archbishop King on the origin of evil, and of his own Theory, Dr. Law omitted the dedication of the former to Dr. Waterland, and of the latter to Dr. Cornwallis. He omitted also all complimentary expressions towards contemporary writers. If these dedications and compliments were not deserved, they ought not to have been published; but, if they were, they ought not to have been suppressed after the death of the parties, unless they had forfeited their pretensions to them; which there is no reason to suppose.

* In addition to the works already mentioned, the bishop's smaller publications, including his tract on subscription and on the life and character of Christ, were the following.

SERMONS.

1. 1743. Litigiousness repugnant to christianity, An assize sermon at Carlisle. (Matt. v. 40.)
2. 1755. Sermon before the Irish protestant schools. (Jer. xxix. 7.)
3. 1768. True nature and interest of religion. A sermon on the death of Dr. Bland prebendary of Durham. (Micah, vi. 8.)
4. 1771. The grounds of a particular providence. A sermon before the lords Jan. 30. (Dan. ii. 21, 22.)

5. 1774.

spending the summer months in his diocese at the bishop's residence at Rose castle; a situation, with which he was much pleased, not only on account of the natural beauty of the place, but because it restored him to the country, in which he had spent the best part of his life. In the year 1787, he paid this visit in a state of great weakness and exhaustion; and died at Rose about a month after his arrival there, on the 14th day of August, and in the 84th year of his age.

The life of Dr. Law was a life of incessant reading and thought, almost entirely directed to metaphysical and religious inquiries; but the tenet by which his name and writings are principally distinguished, is "that Jesus, at his second coming, will,

5. 1774. Sermon before society for propagation of the gospel. (Mal. i. 11.)

TRACTS, all printed at Cambridge.

1. 1746. The nature and necessity of catechising, with some remarks thereon.
2. 1769. A defence of Mr. Locke's opinion concerning personal identity; in answer to the first part of a late Essay on that subject.—Afterwards inserted at the end of the first volume of his edition of Locke's works.
3. 1770. Observations occasioned by the contest about literary property.
4. 1774. Considerations on the propriety of requiring a subscription to articles of faith.
5. 1776. Reflections on the life and character of Christ; with a summary, and appendix on the gospel morals.

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by an act of his power, restore to life and consciousness the dead of the human species, who, by their own nature, and without his interposition, would remain in the state of insensibility, to which the death brought upon mankind by the sin of Adam had reduced them." He interpreted literally that saying of St. Paul, (1. Cor. xv. 21.) "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." This opinion had no other effect upon his own mind than to increase his reverence for christianity, and for its divine founder. He retained it, as he did his other speculative opinions, without laying, as many are wont to do, an extravagant stress upon their importance, and without pretending to more certainty than the subject allowed of. No man formed his own conclusions with more freedom, or treated those of others with greater candor and equity. He never quarrelled with any person for differing from him, or considered that difference as a sufficient reason for questioning any man's sincerity, or judging meanly of his understanding. He was zealously attached to religious liberty, because he thought that it leads to truth: yet from his heart he loved peace. But he did not perceive any repugnancy in these two things. There was nothing in his elevation to his bishoprick which he spoke of with more pleasure, than its being a proof that decent freedom of inquiry was not discouraged.

He was a man of great softness of manners, and of
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the mildest and most tranquil disposition. His voice was never raised above its ordinary pitch. His countenance seemed never to have been ruffled ; it preserved the same kind and composed aspect, truly indicating the calmness and benignity of his temper*. He had an utter dislike of large and mixed companies. Next to his books, his chief satisfaction was in the serious conversation of a literary companion, or in the company of a few friends. In this sort of society he would open his mind with great unreservedness, and with a peculiar turn and sprightliness of expression. His person was low, but well formed ; his complexion fair and delicate. Except occasional interruptions by the gout, he had for the greatest part of his life enjoyed good health ; and, when not confined by that distemper, was full of motion and activity. About nine years before his death, he was greatly enfeebled by a severe attack of the gout in his stomach ; and a short time after that, lost the use of one of his legs. Notwithstanding his fondness for exercise, he resigned himself to this change, not only without complaint, but without any sensible diminution of his cheerfulness and good humour. His fault (for we are not writing a panegyric) was the general fault of retired and studious characters, too great a degree of inaction and facility in his public station.

* His portrait, painted by Mr. Romney, and engraved in metzotinto by W. Dickinson, in 1777, is a very correct likeness.

The modesty, or rather bashfulness, of his nature, together with an extreme unwillingness to give pain, rendered him sometimes less firm and efficient in the administration of authority than was requisite. But it is the condition of human mortality. There is an opposition between some virtues which seldom permits them to subsist together in perfection.

The bishop was interred with due solemnity in his cathedral church, in which a handsome monument is erected to his memory, bearing the following inscription : —

Columnæ hujus sepultus est ad pedem

EDMUNDUS LAW, S. T. P.

per XIX fere annos hujusce ecclesiæ episcopus.

In evangelica veritate exquirenda,

et vindicanda,

ad extremum usque senectutem

operam navavit indefessam.

Quo autem studio et effectû veritatem,

eodem et libertatem christianam coluit;

religionem simplicem et incorruptam,

nisi salva libertate,

stare non posse arbitratus.

Obiit Aug. XIV. MDCCLXXXVII.

Ætat. LXXXIV.

Dr. Paley's further character of his friend and first patron may be seen in the dedication of his "Moral and political philosophy." It is dated in 1785, two years before

before the death of the bishop, and does equal honor to both parties.—The following extract is deserving of particular attention.—

“ A long life spent in the most interesting of all human pursuits, the investigation of moral and religious truth, in constant and unwearied endeavours to advance the discovery, communication, and success of both ; a life so occupied, and arrived at that period which renders every life venerable, commands respect by a title which no virtuous mind will dispute, which no mind sensible of the importance of these studies to the supreme concerns of mankind will not rejoice to see acknowledged. Whatever difference, or whatever opposition, some who peruse your lordship's writings may perceive between your conclusions and their own, the good and wise of all persuasions will revere that industry, which has for its object the illustration or defence of our common christianity. Your lordship's researches have never lost sight of one purpose, namely, to recover the simplicity of the gospel from beneath that load of unauthorized additions, which the ignorance of some ages, and the learning of others, the superstition of weak, and the craft of designing men, have (unhappily for its interest) heaped upon it. And this purpose, I am convinced, was dictated by the purest motive ; by a firm, and, I think, a just opinion, that whatever renders religion more rational, renders it more credible ; that he who, by a diligent and faithful examination of the original records, dismisses from

the system one article which contradicts the apprehension, the experience, or the reasoning of mankind, does more towards recommending the belief, and, with the belief, the influence of christianity, to the understandings and consciences of serious inquirers, and through them to universal reception and authority, than can be effected by a thousand contenders for creeds and ordinances of human establishment.

“ When the doctrine of transubstantiation had taken possession of the christian world, it was not without the industry of learned men that it came at length to be discovered, that no such doctrine was contained in the new Testament*. But had those excellent persons done nothing more by their discovery, than abolished an innocent superstition, or

* Upon this head, and more especially with respect to the renunciation of this doctrine being made a principal part of the national test-oath, I would refer the reader to a very valuable and curious tract, lately published, which does equal honor to the learning, liberality, and ingenuoufness of the writer, and to the age in which we live. See “ A modest apology for the roman catholics of Great Britain, addressed to all moderate protestants ; particularly to the “ members of both houses of parliament,” p. 150—160. 8vo. 1800. Sold by R. Faulder.

Men of reading, reflection and candor of different communions are, each in their own way, *promoting the progress, by restoring the purity, of christianity.* And the time will come, and possibly it may even be precipitated by the violence of some bigots in all communions, when the christian institute will be read and interpreted in the spirit of its first preacher and the character of Christ transfused into that of all his professing disciples both with reference to doctrine, and to manner of life.

changed

changed some directions in the ceremonial of public worship, they had merited little of that veneration, with which the gratitude of protestant churches remembers their services. What they did for mankind was this: they regenerated christianity of a weight which sunk it. If indolence or timidity had checked these exertions, or suppressed the fruit and publication of these inquiries, is it too much to affirm, that infidelity would at this day have been universal? *Rob. Smith 1777*

"I do not mean, my lord, by the mention of this example, to insinuate, that any popular opinion which your lordship may have encountered, ought to be compared with transubstantiation, or that the assurance with which we reject that extravagant absurdity is attainable in the controversies in which your lordship has been engaged: but I mean, by calling to mind those great reformers of the public faith, to observe, or rather to express my own persuasion, that to restore the purity, is most effectually to promote the progress of christianity; and that the same virtuous motive, which hath sanctified their labours, suggested yours. At a time when some men appear not to perceive any good, and others to suspect an evil tendency, in that spirit of examination and research which is gone forth in christian countries, this testimony is become due not only to the probity of your lordship's views, but to the general cause of intellectual and religious liberty."

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